



University of  
Connecticut



New England  
**Invasive Plant Center**

To: Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

From: Mary E. Musgrave

Professor and Head, Department of Plant Science, University of Connecticut  
Co-Director, New England Invasive Plant Center  
and Chair, Connecticut Invasive Plants Council  
Email [mary.musgrave@uconn.edu](mailto:mary.musgrave@uconn.edu); phone (860) 486-2925

Date: February 12, 2009

Written testimony RE:

**Proposed DEP budget reduction to eliminate the Invasive Plants Program, \$500,000**

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Mary Musgrave, speaking to you today on behalf of the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council. This Council was formed in 2003 pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 22a-381 through 22a-381d, as advisory to the Environment Committee on the complex issue of invasive plants in Connecticut. Non-native invasive plants threaten Connecticut's natural areas, including recreational waterways, diminishing quality of life as well as property values.

The Invasive Plant Council, which I chair, is comprised of 9 members representing the nursery industry, public and private environmental protection organizations, the Department of Agriculture, the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UConn. The Council has met 8-10 times a year for 6 years, providing guidance on the state's invasive plant issues. For several years our recommendations included funding a comprehensive invasive plant program in the state. Other states in New England have had such programs for a number of years. In the 2007 budget we were pleased to see \$500,000 for each of two years directed toward the DEP for this purpose. The yearly appropriation of \$500,000 funds the salary of the state's Invasive Plant Coordinator, educational activities such as production of poster exhibits of banned plants (posted where plants are sold), remediation of invasives such as the clean-up of the aquatic invasive Hydrilla from the Silvermine River, inspections for illegal sales of banned invasive plants in pet shops and nurseries, and a Grants to Municipalities Program to encourage management of invasive plants on public use lands. This grants program drew a lot of interest at first offering, indicating how widespread the concern about invasive plants is in the state. Despite a short time period for response, 41 applications were received from 38 municipalities across Connecticut. Funding is available to support only about 1/4 of the applications received.

The Council understands the gravity of the State's financial situation, and why this has led to the proposed elimination of the Invasive Plant Program funds to DEP. We recognize that the likelihood of reinstating the full funding for the program is low during this budget crisis.

Rather than complete elimination of the program, which would effectively force Connecticut back to "square one" with regard to managing invasive plants, we urge retention of a "keep-alive" annual budget of \$100,000, to preserve the inspection and regulatory structure that has been developed. An annual budget of \$100,000 would allow retention of the Invasive Plant Coordinator as well as

funding the necessary inspections at the state's pet shops (Department of Agriculture) and nurseries (CT Agricultural Experiment Station). These core functions are vital to the environmental and economic interests of the State.

In the absence of this core program funding, there would be no mechanism for enforcement of the plant bans that are in effect in the state. At DEP, the Invasive Plant Program Coordinator coordinates the work of agency staff and hundreds of volunteers across the state who are working to control the spread of invasive plants that are devastating natural habitats. The Invasive Plant funding to DEP passes through the Department to support the work of inspectors of pet shops (by Department of Agriculture) and nurseries (by CT Agricultural Experiment Station). Removing these core functions would leave no mechanism for carrying out the regulatory statutes that the state has put in place for dealing with invasive plants.

Therefore the CT Invasive Plant Council respectfully requests that the committee reinstate a minimum of \$100,000 to DEP's budget, for continuation of the core functions of the Invasive Plant Program.

I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for your continued interest in invasive plants as one of many important environmental concerns and for the opportunity to submit this testimony to you.